

From the Margins: Revisiting Mildred Haun's Genre and Literary Craft

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I

Mildred Haun burst onto the Appalachian literary scene when her 1940 book, *The Hawk's Done Gone*, was published. The work, a collection of ten stories, offers an in-depth and instructional catalogue of Haun's native east Tennessee mountain culture through the voice of Mary Dorthula Kanipe, a respected granny-woman trapped in a patriarchal social structure. *The Hawk's Done Gone* enjoyed favorable reviews at its time of publication, but it quickly slipped into obscurity. Haun's short life and complicated relationship with her publisher may have pushed her voice into the margins during her time, but *The Hawk's Done Gone* provides cultural observation and connection to a way of life and oral tradition that is deserving of attention today.

This paper provides a brief biography of Haun, a discussion of the publication history and genre of *The Hawk's Done Gone*, and a close reading of "Melungeon-Colored," a part of the collection that exemplifies many of the themes central to the general body of the work. The significance of *The Hawk's Done Gone* lies as much in what it avoids as what it addresses. Haun's craft, especially in reference to her narrator, allows her to present a catalogue of east Tennessee mountain culture for the instruction of the reader, while her narrator's awareness of the audience and selective sharing facilitate not only observation, but also critique.

Other than a basic timeline of Haun's life where she appears enrolled at universities or employed at government agencies, very little information is available about the Tennessee author. A few articles summarize the details of her life¹, a handful of graduate-level theses make use of Haun's vast catalogue of folk remedies for the sake of comparison to other fields of study,

¹ See Lisa Alther's and Viki Dasher Rouse's 2008 articles in *Appalachian Heritage*.

and the occasional article discusses her as she relates to other Appalachian authors². Haun's longtime friend, who became her literary executor, Herschel Gower, wrote the two pieces on Haun that provide the most information on her life and her work³. As the literary executor of her estate, Gower (1919-2012) was responsible for its transport to Vanderbilt University. Haun's papers remain there, and offer good potential for research. The collection contains drafts of published and unpublished stories, research notes, and manuscripts, as well as personal possessions like maps and postcards from trips and one lone diary featuring fewer than ten entries.

Gower was one of Haun's many contemporaries at Vanderbilt. In 1968, Gower published an article in *Louisiana Studies* titled "Mildred Haun: the Persistence of the Supernatural." In the same year, he wrote the introduction to the second edition of Haun's work, titled *The Hawk's Done Gone and Other Stories*. Both pieces focus heavily on Haun's introspective curiosity and exploration of her own mountain culture, with emphasis on the supernatural and superstitious traditions. Gower's observations on Haun are both the closest to her work chronologically and the most prominently focused on her, without breaking off to discuss other authors and works at length.

Gower was not the only critic to realize *The Hawk's* significance. In October of 1940, the year of *The Hawk's Done Gone's* release, William Kingsbury wrote in the *Nashville Tennessean*, "Mildred Haun's novel sings integrity...the human drama, that hard and violent as it is sum total of her story, they [bastardy, incest, the supernatural, suffering] do not seem out of proportion." That same month, Robert Van Gelder wrote in the *New York Times Book Review*, "These tales

² See Beth Harrison's article "Women Writers, Ethnography, and Regionalism: A Case Study of Emma Bell Miles and Mildred Haun" in the 1993 *Journal of Appalachian Studies Association*.

³ See "Mildred Haun: The Persistence of the Supernatural" in *Louisiana Studies* (1968) and Gower's introduction in *The Hawk's Done Gone and Other Stories* (1968).

are told as from ‘inside’ of a mind and habit conditioned by the influence of a remembered culture...as a quietly factual teller of old tales, Miss Haun records in prose that is as nearly poetry as prose has any right to be....” Most reviews were favorable and shared an admiration for Haun’s ability to observe a culture without rendering it down to stereotypes. Today, redirecting attention to Haun’s work might be a helpful lesson in craft with regards to a region that is often stereotyped.

Haun’s *The Hawk’s Done Gone* is centered on the matriarch of the Kanipe family, Mary Dorthula (née White), and her entries in the family Bible. Mary Dorthula narrates the family’s history from the end of the Civil War through Reconstruction and up until her death in 1939. Her eldest daughter, Amy Kanipe, takes over the narration and tells the last story, which finishes in 1940. As narrator, Mary Dorthula is selective of the parts of her past that she chooses to share. She exercises great agency in constructing her narrative of the story, yet within the patriarchal confines of her society, her narration is one of her only venues of expression and action. In posturing as the authority on Kanipe family history, she creates authority and power for herself in the eyes of the audience.

One of the other significant elements at play in the work, as affirmed in earlier reviews, is the narrative that captures east Tennessee mountain culture without condescension. Beth Harrison writes in her 1993 article, “By creating a narrator who is a participant rather than a spokesperson, Haun avoids the judgmental attitude....” Mary Dorthula is of the culture she aims to explain, so Haun eliminates outside bias.

Haun wrote in the shadow of many contemporaries more famous than she. She applied for the Guggenheim award the same year that Eudora Welty won it for the first time. She published *The Hawk* the same year that Carson McCullers published *The Heart Is a Lonely*

Hunter, and just four years after Margaret Mitchell published *Gone with the Wind* (1936), and a year after the film adaptation was released in 1939. Wilma Dykeman (1920-2006), another Appalachian writer of Haun's generation, enjoyed a similar education to Haun and received recognition until the end of her life. Haun has one small claim to fame: the Mildred Haun Conference meets annually in Morristown, Tennessee, at Walters State Community College to celebrate and discuss Appalachian literature and culture. Given the favorable reviews that *The Hawk's Done Gone* received, and Haun's proximity to other famous writers and contemporaries, her relative obscurity today is both notable and deserving of revisitation.

With the hopes of presenting Haun as an author worthy of renewed critical attention, this paper first discusses the details of Haun's life that are important to an understanding of her work. Though she corresponded extensively with her mentors and contemporaries, Haun wrote very little about herself that was not tailored for a specific audience. Among her many correspondents, John Crowe Ransom, Donald Davidson, and Allen Tate figure prominently. As Herschel Gower writes in his introduction to the second edition of *The Hawk's Done Gone*, Haun was a student in Ransom's fiction and poetry classes at Vanderbilt. Davidson, whose extensive research on Scottish ballads was likely of interest to Haun, advised her M.A. thesis after she earned her B.A. Tate hired her as the managing editor of the *Sewanee Review*, likely at the request of Ransom as per Haun's correspondence with him. Her record and papers show that she was well connected and respected in the Nashville literary community.

As members of the Nashville Agrarians, Ransom, Davidson, Tate, and nine other men compiled a 1930 collection of essays titled *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition*. *The Hawk* sits in conversation with the Agrarians, H.L. Mencken's essay "The Sahara of the Bozart" and Howard Odum's work with the Chapel Hill sociologists. It presents a family

at the end of a cultural moment. The Kanipe family sees serious changes to its mountain culture between the 1860s and 1940. They experience the economic stressors of the mountain South at the turn of the century and through the Depression, and are an embodiment of the problems that the Agrarians and the Sociologists discussed.

Donald Davidson was known for his regionalism and traditionalism, which made him a controversial figure in the Agrarian movement (Dilevko). He once wrote to Herschel Gower concerning his activities and hobbies. His mention of Haun in the same letter shows his ongoing connection with her:

The “other things” include, above all, chairmanship of the Tennessee Federation for Constitutional Gov’t, one of the Southern state organizations (all Southern states now have them) which are fighting the U.S. Supreme Court decision on segregation, as the immediate foe, and socialism-and-communism as the general foe...I have been trying to find a good address for Mildred Haun who was in Memphis when I last heard of her.
(Davison 1955).

Davidson’s regionalism and commitment to the Agrarian movement may have encouraged his interest in Haun. He advised her M.A. thesis on the ballad traditions of her native Cocke County. His own research on Scottish ballads would have had significant overlap with Haun’s and his idealization of the newly “disenfranchised” whites who struggled because of Reconstruction and desegregation would have meshed easily with poor whites in Haun’s work who encounter difficulties finding employment in their newly industrialized environment.

Haun’s proximity to these writers and her access to them on such a personal level was an important step in her academic and professional development. Despite the seemingly male-centric ideals of the Agrarian movement, Ransom, Davidson, and Tate dutifully supported

Haun's career with advice, mentorship, and job opportunities. Their relationships with Haun deserve to be situated within the context of their work and her career.

After working through the basics of Haun's life, career, and education, this paper explores the context of and differences between the two editions of *The Hawk*. The timeline of Haun's life and that of her work are significantly tied together. She spent the last year of her life trying to regain copyright of *The Hawk*, only to die days after she knew there would be a second edition. The second edition (now the only edition in print) is the more widely circulated version of the work. Its ten new (eight of which were previously unpublished) stories give a greater insight into the body of Haun's work, and Gower's introduction provides helpful context on the author and her life.

Finally, this paper provides a close reading of Haun's story "Melungeon-Colored" to observe the narrative structure and craft at work in the larger body of *The Hawk*. "Melungeon-Colored" is representative of major strategies and topics in *The Hawk*: it addresses many of the themes that appear thorough the work and exemplifies the selectivity and agency of the narrator who is otherwise oppressed by her society. The narrative structure that Haun employs has a significant impact on the work: Mary Dorthula's status as both narrator and insider to a culture allows her to invite outsiders into a long-standing tradition of storytelling and oral history.

In this paper, I use several terms relating to genre and character that necessitate definition early on. In section III, I will discuss Haun's work in the context of its publication and genre. The genre of the work was considered ambiguous at the time of publication: Bobbs-Merrill marketed it as a novel, while others called it a collection of short stories or tales. For the sake of clarity, I defer to *Merriam-Webster* for working definitions of these terms. For the purpose of this paper a novel is "an invented prose narrative that is usually long and complex and deals

especially with the human experience through a usually connected sequence of events.” A short story is “an invented prose narrative shorter than a novel usually dealing with a few characters and aiming at unity of effect and often concentrating on the creation of mood rather than plot.” Finally, for the purposes of this paper, a tale is both “a series of facts told or presented” and “a usually imaginative narrative of an event.” Haun’s narrator, Mary Dorthula Kanipe, also requires a definition. She works in the community as a granny-woman, which Harriet Masters describes in her M.A. thesis that cites Haun. Masters says that granny-women served as midwives and herbal healers, but were discredited by the male-dominated medical industry beginning in the 1940s and 50s (2). They were typically older women, and were privileged to the innermost details of family life in their communities. Haun’s Mary Dorthula assists with births and deaths and provides a wealth of folk and superstitious knowledge to those who seek her help.

Haun’s work offers insights into her Appalachian culture without being condescending. The narrator allows Haun to critique without disparaging, and to educate without stereotyping. Mildred Haun and Mary Dorthula Kanipe both exercise agency in the act of selecting and retelling stories to an audience that accepts their authority. Though Haun and *The Hawk* have been out of the spotlight for almost eighty years, a study of both the author and her work is valuable today.

II

Mildred Eunice Haun was born on January 6, 1911, in Russellville, Tennessee. She left home to pursue a high school education in Franklin, Tennessee, as no such schooling was available in her rural community. Having spent her life receiving medical care from “granny women” in her mountain town, Haun dreamed of learning modern medicine alongside traditional herb-based healing methods. She wanted to merge the past with the present in the medical field and become a doctor that her neighbors would trust, but also one who could save their lives when a common cold or an uncomplicated birth took a turn for the worse (Gower, *Introduction*).

Haun graduated with high marks from high school and enrolled at Vanderbilt University in 1931. She soon realized, however, that she was not passionate about learning hard sciences. This discovery, coupled with the shock that she was under the required number of credit hours for the semester (she planned on graduating on time), led her to enroll in John Crowe Ransom’s creative writing class. Gower recounts Haun’s time in Ransom’s class in the introduction to the second edition of *The Hawk*:

As the winter quarter was drawing to a close, Ransom saw enough originality in her work to encourage her to keep on writing until she had a full book of stories. “I promised him I’d stay in the class for the spring quarter if I wouldn’t have to write poetry,” she later recalled. And with this request Ransom gave her a dispensation. While the rest of the class wrote verse, the shy senior sat in the back of the room and kept on with her prose ballads of Cocke Couty. (Gower, *Introduction*).

Haun graduated with her B.A in 1935. She stayed in Nashville and earned her M.A. in 1937. While at Vanderbilt Haun worked closely with Donald Davidson in addition to her work with Ransom and her association with Gower. Davidson oversaw her M.A. thesis on the ballads of

Cocke County. Given Davidson's own research on Scottish ballads and the immigration patterns and trends in the mountain South, Haun would have likely seen some crossover between her work and that of her adviser's. Gower was closer to Haun in age, and figures more in her later life as a friend and sounding board for ideas and projects.

Haun was practical and motivated with regards to her studies. In 1934, on her twenty-third birthday, Haun wrote one of a precious few journal entries. She recounts the day: "My birthday—am 23 years old...hope to accomplish more next week" ("Diary Entry"). This diary from 1934 is available with the rest of Haun's literary estate at Vanderbilt. However, it only chronicles the first few days of January 1934. Whether Haun lost the interest or time to journal her thoughts, the diary is largely blank. In the few words she wrote on her birthday we see the kind of pragmatic and sensible young woman who appears more focused on her work and accomplishments than celebrating her birthday.

As records from her papers at Vanderbilt show, Haun taught science and English at East Franklin High School from 1937-1938, but Nashville called her back. From 1938 to 1939, she held a creative writing fellowship at Vanderbilt, and from 1939-1940, she held a second fellowship at Iowa State. From 1940-1941, she was again a creative writing fellow at Vanderbilt, during which time *The Hawk's Done Gone* was published. Following the publication of *The Hawk* and the end of her fellowship at Vanderbilt, Haun left academia. It appears she wanted to stay involved with the writers of her time. She asked Ransom in a letter dated July 29, 1939, "I've always wanted to go to a Bread Loaf Writer's Conference. You'll be there in 1940, won't you? Did you tell me one time that the fellowship pays one's expenses while there but not the traveling expenses? However it is, though, I want to come" (Haun 1939). Haun would not attend Bread Loaf that summer, nor any summer after. She returned home after the end of her

fellowship and the publication of *The Hawk* to run the family farm in Russellville with her mother while her brothers fought in World War II.

Then, from 1944-1946, she reappeared as Managing Editor of the *Sewanee Review*, under Allen Tate. In a typed letter to Ransom dated April 2, 1944, Haun wrote:

I don't know how this all happened and don't know whether you do or not, but I do have a feeling that maybe you are behind the curtain somewhere, but I got a letter from Allen Tate asking me if I would be interested in the place as combined secretary and editorial assistant on the *Sewanee Review*. I told him I would. (Haun 1944)

Whether or not Ransom was really behind the offer, Haun took the job and worked with Tate for two years, until 1946. In an application for federal employment, Haun describes her responsibilities at the *Review* as soliciting, editing, and proofreading manuscripts, writing acceptance and rejection letters, and writing advertisements (Haun, "Application for Federal Employment").

The circumstances of Haun's resignation from the *Sewanee Review* are unclear. In the same application as above, Haun cites a sickness in her family and goes on to say that from July 1946 until September 1949 she "lived in Franklin, Tennessee, and Nashville, Tennessee, nursed a sick uncle and did free-lance writing." However, as Robert Buffington reports, the reason may have been that Haun complained to then-Chancellor Alexander Guerry about Tate's attempts to seduce her. Buffington goes on to cite further details regarding the incident: when confronted with this accusation, Tate reportedly denied the misconduct and asked "Can you imagine my having an affair with a woman so ugly? She looked like a little boy." Haun was apparently a somewhat awkward woman, especially around men. According to Buffington, Haun's longtime friends Lon and Fannie Cheney reported that Haun was a "strange little witch out of the

mountains...Her relations with men were always peculiar and elementary.” Buffington speculates that Tate may or may not have actually attempted to seduce Haun, but that Haun knew about Tate’s extramarital activity with Elizabeth Hardwick and wanted Tate’s professional attention. Chancellor Guerry and Tate allegedly agreed to ask for Haun’s resignation, but the drama surrounding workplace allegations and extramarital infidelity moved Tate to resign as well (Buffington).

Whatever the case, Haun was working outside the farm and home by 1950, when she took a position with the United States as the Editorial and Informational Clerk at the Arnold Engineering Development Center in Tullahoma, Tennessee. This career change may seem sudden for someone who appeared so focused on creative writing and the publication of her fiction. However, Haun continued writing fiction during her technical writing career, as shown by drafts of an unpublished short story titled “The Root” dated 1950, stored in Herschel Gower’s papers in the Vanderbilt Special Collections Library.

Haun continued with her technical writing career and wrote fiction in her spare time. As her employment records at Vanderbilt show, she left the Arnold Engineering Development Center and became a Publications Editor at the Memphis Air Force depot in Memphis, Tennessee. In 1961, she moved to Virginia to be a Publications Writer in Ft. Belvoir, and in 1962 she made the last career move of her life to the Washington, D.C. area, where she was a Public Information Officer at the USDA Department of Agricultural Research.

Haun died of ovarian cancer at age 55 on December 20, 1966. Only a few days prior, she prevailed in her struggle to regain copyright of *The Hawk* from Bobbs-Merrill. She was planning, with the help of her literary executor, Herschel Gower, to publish a new edition with previously unpublished stories. Haun needed the copyright on the work because she planned to publish the

new edition outside of Bobbs-Merrill. She and Gower worked with Norman Berg, and their plan was that Berg would reprint *The Hawk* (Haun, 1966).

Haun began talking to Gower about a new edition in the beginning of 1966, and by April, she was fighting both publishers and her cancer diagnosis. Haun knew that her diagnosis was not good, but she remained optimistic until the end. She wrote to her friend Fannie Cheney on May 11, 1966: “I still don’t know when or if the treatment [illegible] start [sic]. The gynecologist here says he is still not sure [illegible]...but there is not marked difference. The only thing to do is to keep a close check. I go back for another check the 17th, I guess I’m just a freak” (Haun 1966).

Haun continued to document her illness through letters to Cheney. Later in the year, on July 8, she wrote to Cheney again: “My test was positive, and I had the first treatment yesterday afternoon. The doctors are frank, but both of them advise me to keep on working as long as possible.” The same letter mentions the death of Haun’s mother, who had been in poor health as well. Haun’s doctors ran the gauntlet of treatments, sometimes with ill effects. In October, Haun wrote Cheney and said she had been in the hospital for a number of weeks:

Been in W.G. Hospital [sic] since Aug. 26--taken in swollen and unconscious from allergic reaction to the cancer treatments...If at end of two weeks, [illegible] and bleeding and other things are no better, will go back into G.W. for chemo-therapy and from there whatever experiments they want to try for benefit of science. (Haun 1966)

Haun discusses her condition frankly and clinically, but her mention of the “benefits of science” is both a stark recognition of the severity of her condition and a wry nod to the power of her illness.

On November 13, 1966, just over a month before her death, Haun sent a telegram to Gower: “The worst of the treatment is over. Will be two or three weeks before information on its

effectiveness. Will remain in hospital. Tell my friends am still in the ring.” However, just a month later and a few days before her death, Haun’s friend Elsie Stokes had to transcribe her note to Fannie Cheney on December 12: “I suppose you know that the doctors gave me up and notified next of kin...” (Haun 1966). Cheney was a close confidant and friend, as proven by years of correspondence and communication between the two. In discussing the doctors’ frankness and the implied implications of advice like theirs, Haun reckons with the eventual fatality of her illness.

Haun’s condition was an uncontrolled and unpredictable element for her loved ones and friends, but it also made planning for the new edition of *The Hawk* and any work beyond the confines of the hospital a challenge as far as scheduling and commitment. Days before her death, Haun received notice from Berg that he was interested in reprinting *The Hawk*. She had also recently received notice that she would regain rights to her work. Five days before she passed away, Haun wrote back to Berg:

Your letter came while I was hovering between life and death, and I have just today read it. I am excited over the possibility of your reprinting *The Hawk*. Bobbs-Merrill has released all rights to me. I will be leaving the hospital in a few days and will write you and Herschel. My thoughts on all aspects of it [sic]. (Haun 1966)

Haun never saw the new printing of her work, though she spent the last year of her life fighting to realize her dream of a second edition of *The Hawk*.

Haun grappled with her imminent death in several ways, including her lengthy correspondence concerning her condition and reaching out to Gower with regards to her literary estate. She wrote him in November of 1966, asking him to manage her literary estate when the time came. She said:

I feel real presumptuous about having a literary executor--but when I got into my things, I found I had gone right on collecting folk sayings, riddles, weather lore, more songs, etc...The point is, will you be my literary executor?...the doctors here have tested all week and tell me that unless a miracle happens, I can't fight cancer much longer...I don't believe a word the doctors say, and I do believe in miracles. I think I'll be around for some time, but I won't change my mind on who [sic] I want to have the say-so on my unpublished materials. And you are young⁴. (Haun 1966)

Haun's realism about her mortality combines with her acceptance of the inevitable to create the image of a relatively young woman facing the end of her life, but not the end of her potential. In asking Gower to be her literary executor, Haun left her final project in the hands of someone who knew and respected her work, thus reassuring her that her work would be safe after she was gone.

Haun had a vision for the management and execution of her estate. By 1968, Gower had executed Haun's will and moved her papers and assets to the Vanderbilt English department. She had no other heirs. After her papers were moved to Vanderbilt and the remainder of her estate was liquidated, Overton Williams, a Vanderbilt graduate and then-university comptroller received inter-department notice of this gift: "...Miss Haun's estate valued at \$20,412.72, has been willed to Vanderbilt for the exclusive use of the English department...this amount has been invested and its earnings may be used by the English department" (Young). As the executor, Gower was responsible for moving all of her assets to the Vanderbilt English department, and for assuming personal possession of her writing and research. Though he was not obligated to finish the project of reprinting *The Hawk*, Gower rose to the occasion and finished the job. It is unclear exactly how far Haun and Gower planned ahead and decided which revisions to make and which

⁴ Gower was 47 at the time.

new stories to add, however. They may have decided before her death on the selection and order of previously unpublished work. Gower may have had full editorial authority. Or Gower may have had an idea of Haun's vision for the "other stories" in *The Hawk's Done Gone and Other Stories*, and been able to fill in the holes.

Haun was working and publishing in a time when many other famous authors in her field of study and geographic region were hard at work. She studied at Vanderbilt under some of the most famous members of the Agrarian movement. She held creative writing fellowships at Vanderbilt and Iowa State. She had close relationships with influential members of the Vanderbilt faculty and the Agrarian movement, in addition to her long-term correspondence with D. L. Chambers, the president of Bobbs-Merrill. She was so entrenched in the academic setting of her contemporaries that she applied for Bread Loaf and Guggenheim⁵ fellowships, though they never came to fruition. Despite her good connections, Haun never managed to solidify the kind of prominence that many of her mentors and contemporaries enjoy today. However, her work is more than deserving of our attention: she offers outsiders to her culture a way in through a storytelling narrator and a nod to oral tradition; she uses fiction to catalogue and preserve a dying culture with an observational lens and a lack of the condescension which can sometimes appear in texts that attempt the same kind of work⁶.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of Haun's work is the way that her craft functions as observation. Her academic background was based significantly in cultural preservation, as shown by her immense M.A. thesis on the ballads of her native Cocke County, Tennessee. The second edition of *The Hawk* stays true to this origin. Gower's introduction of the second edition nods to

⁵ Haun applied for a Guggenheim fellowship in 1942, as written in her correspondence with D.L. Chambers of the same year. 1942 was the year that Eudora Welty won the prize for the first of two times.

⁶ For an example of a work that seeks to catalogue and preserve a culture, but gives the impression of a superior observer and his inferior subjects, several chapters in Horace Kephart's *Our Southern Highlanders* (1913) provide such a perspective.

Haun's passion for cultural observation and the importance she placed on her ballad research.

The additional stories he chose run in the same vein of *The Hawk*: their existence helps preserve a then-antiquated, and now-extinct, culture.

A working knowledge of the basics of Haun's life is essential for a good understanding of her work and fiction. She was doubtlessly passionate about creating an image of her home from the perspective of an insider. Her work on ballads in her native Cocke County was one of the first, if not the only, to discuss song and music traditions of that specific area. It is demonstrative of a research style that looked to serve its subjects. Her work in, *The Hawk's Done Gone* and *The Hawk's Done Gone and Other Stories*, presents an observational style of writing that showcases her home through a lens that encourages study and participation, not the development of a sense of "other." During her time at Vanderbilt University, she had the opportunity to work with well-known authors in her field like John Crowe Ransom and Allen Tate. Haun's prominence among her contemporaries and her life story are essential elements to a discussion of her fiction. Her work is so steeped in her culture that an exploration of her role in its academic study and its application in practice is helpful.

III

When discussing *The Hawk's Done Gone*, it is important to understand that the edition that remains in print is actually the second edition, edited by Haun's literary executor, Herschel Gower. He published *The Hawk's Done Gone and Other Stories* in 1968, two years after her death. Haun's *The Hawk's Done Gone* and *The Hawk's Done Gone and Other Stories* encourage respectful observation and scholarship of the people in her home region. Though Haun's complicated relationship with her publisher may have lead to a silencing of her authorial voice and the sale of the first edition of *The Hawk's Done Gone* as a novel, Gower's criticism and the addition of more stories help to place the work in the oral and storytelling traditions of the tale.

After Haun's initial publication of *The Hawk* in 1940, she went on to work in technical writing for over twenty-five years. Near the end of her life, however, she and her close friend, Herschel Gower, began work on republishing the book in a second edition with previously unpublished work. In January of 1966, eleven months before her death, Haun wrote to Gower, "In going through my trunk yesterday, I found all kinds of materials I didn't realize I had. I wish you could come up and just look though things...Anyway, since you are such [sic] good adviser, just tell me what you think" (Haun 1966). It is unclear whether or not Haun knew that she was sick before she decided to pursue the second edition. Either way, she shows her trust in Gower and her desire to publish more previously unseen works.

Later that year in April, Haun wrote to William H. Y. Hackett, at Bobbs-Merrill, concerning copyright of *The Hawk*: "...I request that the copyright of The Hawk's Done Gone be reverted to me. How long should I expect to wait before receiving written notice that the request has been granted?" (Haun 1966). All along, Haun kept Gower up to date with the process. Just a few weeks after she wrote Hackett, she checked in with Gower: "I also asked about renewing the

copyright and the woman I talked to said I couldn't for another year yet, but I'll keep talking to different ones. I think the collected stories sounds wonderful..." (Haun 1966). Here Haun shows now only her enthusiasm for a second edition, but her excitement over the addition of more stories to *The Hawk*. She also demonstrates her unwavering commitment to the new edition, with her insistence that she will keep calling and writing until she regains copyright of her work.

The stories that Gower added to *The Hawk* are noteworthy individually, of course, but as a whole, they contribute to a view of the work that Haun and Gower shared. In his introduction to the new edition, Gower refers to the stories in *The Hawk* as stories, not a novel, as Bobbs-Merrill sold it. If the status of *The Hawk's Done Gone* as a novel is up for debate, its publication alongside other works that are firmly billed as short fiction creates the sense that the entire collection might actually be short fiction.

With his additions, Gower demonstrates a deep knowledge of Haun's work since 1940. "Dave Cocke's Motion," originally called "A Motion," was one of Haun's most frequently drafted stories. As her papers at Vanderbilt show, she worked and reworked the story and the title numerous times before her death. Other stories like "The Turkey's Feather" were published in reviews and journals, thus Gower could confirm that they had reached a state of completion in Haun's eyes.

Gower wrote in his introduction to the second edition that Haun's work is "...an almost comprehensive treatment of superstition in the Southern Appalachians" (Gower 16). He later goes on to say that "...Christianity is a somewhat casual influence in the animalistic world..." (18). He also describes *The Hawk* as being a "...dialect collection from the South...as close to the oral tradition...[and] distinctive flavor and natural tonal qualities" (15). Gower's assessment of superstition and religion and their place in Haun's work is a nod to the observational catalogue

it creates and the socio-cultural preservation that it encourages. In the same vein as observation and preservation, Gower notes that Haun's narrator is a reflection of both the author and her culture. They share a birthday (January 6, also known as Old Christmas) and a cultural history that allows Haun to both critique and display her home.

The two editions of *The Hawk* are, in fact, remarkably different in their contents. However, it is impossible to discuss one edition without the context of the other. To treat *The Hawk's Done Gone* without mentioning the second edition or the added stories would be to ignore the full history of the work. To address *The Hawk's Done Gone and Other Stories* without providing the information that "other stories" were added almost thirty years later and that a first edition of the book was circulated as a novel would fail as a full and complete picture of the work. A discussion of one necessitates at least a mention of the other.

Among the contributors to Gower's conversation about Haun's work is Lloyd Davis of the *Appalachian Review*. Long after the initial publication of *The Hawk*, and shortly after Haun's death, Gower submitted some of Haun's work to the *Appalachian Review*. Davis wrote in response to Gower's submission in May of 1967:

As far as the stories are concerned, I don't think we would be interested in publishing any of them. Our policy is to try to find creative works which transcend folk roots through some kind of sophistication. I did not feel that Miss Haun's stories succeeded as stories. Much of the dialect seems to be injected purely for the sake of Local color...they remain, it seems to me, recorded folk tales or written anecdotes, but do not have much to offer as literary art. (Davis)

Though Davis did not feel that Haun's stories succeeded beyond local color and anecdotal folk tales, he accepts their validity as independent pieces of writing connected by one author and the themes that she chooses to explore.

In response to Lloyd Davis, Herschel Gower wrote back in defense of Haun's pieces. In the same month of 1967, he said: "The irony is that Mildred wrote chapters of novels but never wrote a novel. The stories singly taken are not well made in terms of the critical demands of the modern short story. The genre is of course the tale" (Gower). Thus, Gower accepts Davis' criticism of the stories as they stand alone and admits to their weaknesses as independent works, but nods to their strength when read together.

The publication history of *The Hawk* is inescapably entwined with its ambiguous state of genre. The work has been branded as short fiction, as a novel, and as a collection of tales, with no real consensus on where it actually falls. Gower used "tales" and "stories" with some variation, and her publisher at Bobbs-Merrill made the unilateral decision to market the work as a novel. This grey area allows readers to interpret the work further. Given the different opinions on the book's genre, the reader is not only allowed to analyze the plot and themes but is also permitted to judge the work against the different genre categories and make a decision on where it may fall.

A full discussion of its genre sheds further light the story behind the publication of *The Hawk's Done Gone* and *The Hawk's Done Gone and Other Stories*. Insofar as narrative structure and content of the second edition of *The Hawk* are concerned, the work is best classified as a collection of stories or tales rather than a loosely-constructed novel: this difference in classification may have had significant impact on the so-called "life" of the work. *The Hawk* fails as a novel due to the loose connections between the separate stories. Decades pass between

narratives, and the only thing that holds them together is the narrator and her connection to her family and the Bible in which she records their births and deaths. *The Hawk* fails as a collection of short stories because so much of what we, the audience on the outside, are supposed to learn is embedded in the plot. Mary Dorthula certainly establishes a significant mood, but the way that she places information about her culture, its superstitions, and its traditions shows that the plot is as important, if not more so, than the mood.

The tale, however, allows for the conversational and educational tone of the narrator. It is a series of events that are told or presented, or an imaginative narrative of an event (Merriam-Webster). Mary Dorthula addresses her audience to tell them the events in her life and the life of her family members. She doesn't simply recount the events: a large portion of her agency as a character is in her power as the speaker to present her stories to us with her side of the events in mind. Additionally, the supernatural and magical elements at play in the collection render each of Mary Dorthula's stories its own, standalone tale. Each tale centers on an event in her family history. She gives each new section of the work a numerical marker and a distinction as to which family member she will present. While Mary Dorthula is the connecting element in the collection, each event in the history of the family focuses on the life and actions of one of her children or grandchildren.

The tales make more sense as a collection, a fact that allows Haun to plug into a larger tradition of Appalachian storytelling. Mary Dorthula is a storyteller. She is aware of her audience and she consciously creates a narrative to teach her listeners and readers about her family and their culture. Like the real-life Hicks family and their Jack tales, Mary Dorthula spins the past and the supernatural into a self-sustaining story that is strengthened by the others in the collection.

Tales and genre aside, D.L. Chambers of Bobbs-Merrill was perhaps one of the most opinionated voices concerning Haun's work. He worked closely with Haun on the publication of *The Hawk* and continued his correspondence with her past the 1940 release of her work. Concerning *The Hawk*, Chambers considered the work a novel. In July of 1940, a few months before the release of the work, he wrote to Haun:

We shall present it [The Hawk's Done Gone] as a novel, not as a collection of short stories. The term novel has come to have a broad and inclusive use; it seems quite justified for your book because it is all built around one life, all flows from Grandma Kanipe, and with that integration also give a picture of a family, a community, and exposition of a local way of life...Such are the difficulties in selling collections of short stories, that if The Hawk's Done Gone were offered as one, I fear that the most we could hope for would be a 'flop d'estime, (Chambers).

Chambers' reasoning for marketing *The Hawk* as a novel, while primarily based in his desire to sell copies, is worth discussing in the context of labeling. He claims the concept of a novel is a more nebulous, inclusive thing than in years past. He also says that *The Hawk* is a novel because it centers on the life of Mary Dorthula Kanipe. Thus, Haun found herself the author of a "novel" whether she wanted to be or not.

The largest source of information concerning how Haun saw herself as a writer is in the correspondence and drafts she left behind. If we accept a blurry line between the short story and the tale for the purposes of understanding Haun's fiction outside the context of the novel, we are privy to a wealth of clues that Haun left in her literary estate. The first and foremost fact is that Haun left dozens of unpublished stories. The significance here is not necessarily in the sheer volume of stories she wrote, but in the fact that in her lifetime, she wrote only one work that she

considered a novel. The history of this unfinished, unpublished novel is almost as important as the publication history of *The Hawk*. In fact, both stories are tied to Haun's relationship with Chambers.

After the publication of *The Hawk*, Haun's correspondence with Chambers shows that she continued to send him stories and hoped to complete a second collection of short fiction. Chambers, however, continuously rejected the stories in favor of a novel. In August of 1940, with a few months left to go before *The Hawk* hit shelves, he asked Haun, "What are you going to write next? I hope you are thinking about a full length novel, and already working on it" (Chambers 1940). The pressure he put on her for years concerning a novel is evident in their communication before her first work was even available for purchase. Chambers continued this pressure for almost a decade.

Through the 1940s, Haun moved from job to job and continued to send stories written in her free time to Chambers. He remained one of her regular correspondents, though she was not destined to see another book publication in her lifetime. In their communication, we see some of the problematic dynamics at play that may have had influence on the way that Chambers treated Haun and her work. On November 20, 1940, close to the release of *The Hawk*, Chambers discusses Haun's "beautiful red dress." A few days later, on November 29, Chambers writes Haun again to qualify that, "Maybe the dress isn't new, but anyhow from admiring friends I know how pretty you look in it." In late 1940, Chambers' letters to Haun guilt her for not writing enough and in early 1941, he continuously asks her to send along a photograph of her for him to put in his office. He also shifts to addressing her as "niece" and signs his letters as her "uncle."

Chambers instills a sense of familial obligation in his use of "uncle" and "niece" to describe his relationship with Haun. This sense of obligation and his pressure on her to produce a

full-length novel may have contributed to the brevity of Haun's career as a fiction writer, though this claim is hard to substantiate when Haun wrote precious little about her thoughts and experiences in first person.

Thus, with the knowledge and context of her relationship with Chambers in mind, we must turn to the lone unpublished novel left in Haun's literary estate. She continued to send short pieces to Chambers for his review, hoping to receive an advance on a second work. Chambers continued to pressure Haun to write a full-length novel. Sometime before February of 1949, Haun sent Chambers a grouping of stories that included a piece called "And Then the Fire Went Out." On February 25, 1949, Chambers wrote back that he could not offer Haun an advance, as usual, but that he would very much like to see what "And Then the Fire Went Out" might look like as a novel.

Haun finally took his advice, or so it would seem. In her papers, an unpublished and unfinished manuscript titled *Runner Girl* has an almost identical opening to "And Then the Fire Went Out." The two feature the same main character and storyline, but one is in short story format and the other is a novel. Haun never sent the novel to Chambers, but the fact that she acquiesced to him is significant. Also noteworthy is the fact that once Gower was in charge of Haun's literary estate, he published other previously unseen short pieces, but held back from publishing *Runner Girl*. He may have known something about Haun's level of satisfaction with the piece that stayed his hand, or perhaps he saw her as a writer of tales and not of novels. Regardless, the work remains unpublished.

Thus, with the chronology of the publication of *The Hawk*, as well as Haun's relationship with Chambers in mind, it is with great care that I suggest that Gower was correct in labeling *The Hawk* as a collection of tales. The "chapters" of the so-called novel stand alone in the sense that

a reader could make out most of the details of the plot if he or she read just one piece of the collection. The concise narration of each “chapter” brings us quickly to the climax of the particular piece and lends a sense of immediacy. Chambers’ claim that the narrative is built around Mary Dorthula is true in a literal sense, but this stance ignores the complex relationship between the narrator and her family, community, and homeland and fails to allow for any interpretation that might deepen the narrative structure of the work. It may well be that Mary Dorthula’s purpose is simply to narrate her story, but it is also possible that she is deeply, metaphorically entwined with her family, community, and/or homeland in a way that her position as narrator of a novel, as assigned by Chambers, does not appropriately observe.

Gower’s stance that Haun’s genre is the tale is further exemplified by the way he treats *The Hawk’s Done Gone* in *The Hawk’s Done Gone and Other Stories*. In referring to the additional material as “stories” and placing the second collection after the original content of *The Hawk*, Gower legitimizes *The Hawk’s* status as something other than a novel. His choice not to integrate the new stories into the content of *The Hawk* demonstrates his recognition that *The Hawk* can stand on its own, but the act of publishing the new stories after *The Hawk* in the first place shows that Gower understood that the collection had room for more of Haun’s work.

The publication history of *The Hawk* and Haun’s relationship with Chambers are essential factors in a discussion concerning the genre of the work. Gower’s addition of ten more stories in the later version becomes significant within the context of genre and Haun’s work. It is highly possible that Haun’s genre was limited from the start when Chambers used his position of authority over her to label *The Hawk* a novel in 1940. This choice likely colored readings and reviews in a way that may have lead to a different understanding of the Kanipe family than Haun originally intended. Regardless, D.L. Chambers took agency from Haun when he decided her

genre for her with regards to the first edition of *The Hawk*, and death took away her voice when it came time to publish the second edition. Luckily, Gower was far more aligned with Haun's wishes, as shown by their collaboration on the project in the last year of her life. Still, she was denied the final say twice over with regards to the same book, leaving the genre of her work up for exploration and debate.

IV

In *The Hawk's Done Gone*, Haun presents superstition, ballad traditions, folk medicine, racial and gendered violence, and complicated family dynamics. These themes appear to a great extent in “Melungeon-Colored” (*HDG* 97-111). Haun’s narrator, Mary Dorthula Kanipe, observes and reports with suppressed agency. Her status as both someone who is disadvantaged within the patriarchal constructs of society and as the person telling the story allows her to discuss the more unsavory events with what seems like impartiality but is more similar to posturing and selectivity. Her narration captures dialogue and other elements of life and speech of the Kanipe family by facilitating a discussion-based narration with the audience, maintaining a distant position from the plot through time and tone, and editing her reconstruction of the moment without tokenizing or overselling their position as mountain people. Haun’s use of narrative structure and observational distance allows Mary Dorthula to address her audience as people who come from outside her own culture with the goal of learning about mountain folkways, rather than being entertained by them. The themes and narrative structure at play in “Melungeon-Colored” are representative of the work as a whole and of Mary Dorthula Kanipe’s instructional invitation to participate in mountain oral tradition.

In “Melungeon-Colored,” a term that figures prominently is the so-called ethnic group in question. Melungeons, as they are called, have existed under many different definitions over the years. As John Shelton Reed wrote in *Southern Cultures*, “At one time or another it has been argued that they’re descended from ancient Carthaginians, the Lost Tribes of Israel, twelfth-century Welsh explorers, the DeSoto and Pardo expeditions, the Lost colony of Roanoke Island, and shipwrecked mariners from several different swarthy nations” (29). He goes on to present

some of the more unflattering lore, saying that one of the myths surrounding Melungeons was that Satan's wife drove him from Hell to the mountains of East Tennessee and that this ethnic group descends from his progeny with a Native American woman (29).

Even the root of the word "Melungeon" has been contested. Reed explains that it could come from *mélange* (French for "mix"), *melan* (Greek for "black"), or from *melungo* (Portuguese for "shipmate") (29). Reed says that genealogical studies show Melungeon ancestry to incorporate European, African, and Native American DNA to create what is called a "triracial isolate" (29). As Rachel Rubin points out, many people of mixed-race descent have identified as Portuguese in order to "pass" as white (259). No matter their origin, Rubin boldly points out one of the major issues that Melungeons have faced:

Over the last century and a half, Southern white people have constituted Melungeons at once as a mystery (because no one has been able to prove conclusively whether the roots of this group are in Portugal, Native America, African America or some mixture) and as a solid fact (they are non-white) deployed by some Southerners to shore up their own contingent sense of white privilege. (260)

As an ethnic group, Melungeons have been subject to outside definitions and prejudices including but not limited to offensive origin myths and speculation as to their genealogy. Origins aside, the most important part of their background to the plot of "Melungeon-Colored" is that they have filled the role of "other" in the traumatic narrative of disenfranchised whites in the American South, especially with regard to the economic strife following Reconstruction. As nonwhite members of the Appalachian South, they would have faced considerable discrimination.

The events in “The New Jerusalem” (*HDG* 80-96) that precede those of “Melungeon-Colored” provide helpful context for the story. Mary Dorthula’s daughter by Ad Kanipe, Effena, marries Murf Owens, a so-called “Melungeon.” Mary Dorthula describes Murf Owens and his ethnicity with a surprising degree of tolerance. Her objectivity towards Effena’s happiness, regardless of her partner’s ethnicity, demonstrates the importance she places on the members of her family being fulfilled. She says: “Murf was a Melungeon, but I didn’t see why that should make any difference...Melungeon folks can tell about themselves—how they are an old race of folks, and how they started somewhere on a ship. They had some kind of trouble on the ship and ended up here...Murf was a good worker and he thought a heap of Effena” (*HDG* 80-81). Effena and Murf wind up married and happy, until her half-brother Linus drives Murf away from their marriage, kills him, and moves into their house with the goal of continuing his incestuous and nonconsensual sexual activity with his stepsister. Effena dies two days after the birth of her child by Murf. She names the baby girl Cordia.

With the knowledge of Cordia’s parentage and ethnicity as set up in “The New Jerusalem” the conflict in “Melungeon-Colored” is apparent. In “Melungeon-Colored” we learn that Mary Dorthula and her husband Ad promised Effena on her deathbed that they would raise Cordia as their own daughter and not reveal her real parents. Mary Dorthula explains:

So when Effena saw she was going to die she asked me not to ever let Cordia know that her pa had been a Melungeon...I just know Effena said for me to raise Cordia up to think she didn’t ever have any other pa or ma. And she said for me not to ever let Cordia get married. I could see how Effena thought. I knowed if Cordia ever had any boy youngons they would be Melungeon-colored and her man might not understand. I knew, and I promised Effena just as the breath went out of her. (*HDG* 98-99).

With Cordia's ethnic background—and the cultural ramifications of her status as a mixed-race individual—in mind, her safety and reputation are at risk without her knowledge. At the beginning of the story, we learn that Cordia has snuck away and married Mos Arwood. Having failed to keep the first part of her promise to Effena, Mary Dorthula must prevent Cordia from having children with Mos, lest they present as anything other than undeniably white.

Cordia goes on to birth a mixed-race child—a son—but Mos kills her, on the assumption that she has been unfaithful to him, soon after the birth. Thus, Mary Dorthula and Mos, the father, are left with the decision of what to do with the baby who, to his actual father appears to be a bastard fathered by the man Mos hired to help around his property and who happened to also be of Melungeon descent. Mos elects to bury the infant alive in the coffin with his mother, rather than be tasked with raising a child of mixed race. Thus, one murder becomes two, and Mos demonstrates a cultural attitude toward mixed-race families that Mary Dorthula may not agree with but is certainly powerless to oppose.

One of the main themes at work in both *The Hawk* and in “Melungeon-Colored” specifically is the prevalence of superstition and the supernatural. Mary Dorthula discusses these themes with a frankness and candor that force the reader to accept her principles as part of daily life. She maintains a level of passive observance, especially in times of crisis, which distances her from the subject matter. She is knowledgeable and insightful, and her lack of reaction places the onus of emotional response on the reader. Her calm acceptance of the events in the story, and the work overall, establishes trust between her and her audience: whatever she says is best accepted and not fought. So, when she discusses violence, death, and superstition as everyday events, her passive tone and calm demeanor lead the reader not only to accept what she says

without question, but also to have individual emotional responses instead of mirroring the narrator's reaction.

With that baseline established, her narrative style and voice allow her to instruct the reader in all manner of otherwise implausible things. After establishing the existence of the superstitions, she bolsters them with credibility. Her acknowledgement of the presence of omens and their causes and effects in a neutral, calm tone borders on journalistic. Early in the story, she explains that she could not simply tell Cordia about her ethnicity because “..if you tell something a dying person asks you not to tell you will be haunted by that person the rest of your life. Everybody you tell will be haunted too” (*HDG* 97). Later, after Cordia's marriage, Mary Dorthula says that her milk cow has been dry in one of her teats for over a week, which she says is, “the worst of bad luck” (*HDG* 101). After Mary Dorthula's moment with the milk cow, Cordia comes home to tell her grandmother that she is three months pregnant. Mary Dorthula's candid and frank discussion of superstition, luck, and signs is reinforced by the course of the plot. Upon seeing a bad omen, she receives bad news. This style of cataloguing superstition using quick asides from the narrator allows Haun to share beliefs that, while once widely held in Appalachian culture, may be unfamiliar to the reader.

Mary Dorthula is a granny woman and a practitioner of folk medicine so it is natural for her to share her expertise with her audience. Part of her utility as a narrator lies in that knowledge, because it allows Haun to catalogue and preserve old ways of healing and doctoring that are now certainly out of fashion. Mary Dorthula's profession is also an instrumental plot device because it allows her the privilege of both medical knowledge and social access. During pregnancies, births, and deaths she sees families (especially women) at their most vulnerable. She also navigates the work without stereotyping herself. She is able to present an important a

cultural archetype with a respectful lens and an educational tone for an audience with a different cultural background.

Mary Dorthula promises herself that she will induce a miscarriage should Cordia announce a pregnancy to her, a likely event given her recent marriage, and her confidence in Mary Dorthula as both a [grand]mother and granny woman. Mary Dorthula says:

I made her [Cordia] promise to come right to me and let me know at the first sign [of pregnancy] she had. I hate to own up to what I was aiming on doing. All these years I have been a Granny-woman I never have give anybody a thing to knock a youngon.

Heaps of women have begged me to. It is just one of the things I always said no to. But with Cordia it was different. What I was aiming on doing was to give her a quart of hot pennyroyal tea. Ma told me about it back when she was teaching me... (*HDG* 99-100).

Pennyroyal is “extremely toxic” and in addition to its longtime use as an abortifacient in folk medicine, it can cause depleted red blood cells, fatigue, confusion, dizziness, hallucinations, seizures, and abdominal pain, among other side effects (Skidmore-Roth). Whether or not Mary Dorthula would have known about its dangers, she certainly knew that it would, if administered in enough time, end a pregnancy that she deemed inappropriate. Regardless, Haun makes excellent use of this moment in the plot by using her narrator and the moment in the story to preserve a piece of medical tradition inside the story.

Though Mary Dorthula proves an excellent mouthpiece and tool for Haun to preserve light and dark elements of a culture, supporting characters pull their weight in bringing Haun’s observations to light. Mos, Cordia’s husband, exhibits an especially horrifying level of gendered and racial violence toward his wife and newborn son. After he murders Cordia, Mos spends all night building her coffin to hide his crime. He hammers a few boards together and, when he

realizes that the coffin is too short, elects to break Cordia's knees instead of making a few adjustments to the carpentry. Though the second act of violence he visits on Cordia is post-mortem, it reflects the violence he may have acted out on her body had she survived the birth.

The newborn boy survives the night, much to Mary Dorthula's dismay. She says she "...prayed the Lord would let [him] die before we got the coffin made. But it didn't. It kept on whimpering and gasping. I never could have stood it if I had been in my right mind. I was scared...Mos would hit me in the head with that hammer" (*HDG* 109). Thus, the baby boy survives the night, only to be buried alive in the morning with his broken mother at the will of his father. Mary Dorthula stoically witnesses these atrocities, but she is sure to tell her audience that she feared for her life and was in shock. Her actions present neutrality, but her commentary gives an account of her emotions that does not work to sway the reader, but rather to show how she felt in the moment.

Mos's violence toward Cordia is by definition gendered, and by no means exclusive to Appalachia. He suspects her of engaging in extramarital activity and expresses his displeasure on her body, both in murder and after her death. The murder of his own son, however, is based in racial prejudice and assumption of bastardy. In incorporating a common theme like domestic violence with concepts like superstitious traditions that are unique to a certain area, Haun adds a sobering element of universality, which bolsters her connection to an audience who may not fully comprehend the culture at hand.

Mary Dorthula's tone keeps the narration observational and without judgment, which places the burden of judging Mos's actions on the reader. In this way, Haun maintains an almost scientific level of distance from the violence in the work, while her choice to discuss it at all implies a desire to make others aware of its presence. Haun's brand of fatalism in her work—

maintaining distance and withholding judgment while forcing a discussion by simply presenting troubling, disturbing concepts—appears in Mary Dorthula’s narrative tone. She remains a passive observer, all the while creating a space for interpretation and emotion for the reader. She cannot directly voice her opinions on the injustice of her world because of the extent to which her patriarchal society controls her. Her husband Ad, her stepsons, her sons, and her sons-in-law all maintain a level of dominance over her. How they choose to interact with her is up to them, but they have the option to order her around like Linus, force her into silence like Mos, or treat her with kindness and respect like Joe. Her power comes neither from social mobility nor privilege, but from her ability to survive others and present a narrative in her words. Thus, her agency lies in the privilege she holds as the main narrative voice.

Another theme that “Melungeon-Colored” explores is the presence of music and ballads in mountain culture. The first instance of song appears when Mary Dorthula and Mos are crossing the flooded river to get to Cordia and the baby on the night of the birth. The second appears at the end of the work, when the weather finally clears enough to have a funeral service for Cordia. In both instances, it is Mary Dorthula who sings, and both cases demonstrate concern over being lost—in water and fire. Her use of song to convey worry and loss connects her to a broader community of people who recognize and identify with the lyrics. Haun’s presentation of song lyrics allows her to invoke a longstanding tradition of music and melody and display its prominence in her characters’ daily lives. As Mary Dorthula sings the ballads, she joins a discreet network of song that allows her to express her true emotions in a moment of stress without breaking her cover as a stoic and silent partner in the arrangement. Many of the stories in *The Hawk* contain verses of ballads, thus enforcing the importance of music in the lives of the characters. Haun’s personal interest in the ballads of her home is significant here because it

demonstrates the kind of work that her fiction does: by writing songs into her stories, Haun is able to preserve the lyrics and the oral and musical traditions of her home.

From domestic violence to the deepest secrets and deathbed promises, family dynamics play an important role in “Melungeon-Colored.” As Effena dies at the end of “The New Jerusalem” she begs Mary Dorthula to keep Cordia’s parentage a secret (and to keep her from marrying and having children) to protect her from the judgment of a husband who would undoubtedly be displeased at the idea of a mixed-race family. Mary Dorthula finds herself on the secret-keeping end of another implicit promise to Mos after Cordia’s death and the murder of her baby. The difference between these two promises is that Mos is completely in charge of the second interaction. Mary Dorthula says that she fears for her life and is in a different state of consciousness while he makes the coffin and digs the grave. She is in danger, and should she break Mos’s trust, there will be real, deadly consequences to her actions. On the other hand, her agreement with Effena is mutual. Mary Dorthula believes that keeping the truth from Cordia is the best choice and will keep her the safest. However wrong she wound up being, she was a willing participant in the construction of that family secret and dynamic. Mos, however, forced her hand with threats and violence.

Haun’s treatment of these main themes is prevalent in the entirety of *The Hawk*. Women suffer in abusive marriages, men decide that infants are not worth raising to adulthood so they turn to murder, the bereaved and the enamored sing their emotions, and granny women provide roots, herbs, and wisdom to assist people in the community as they enter, inhabit, and exit the world. Haun’s choice to incorporate Mary Dorthula, a granny woman and a literal grandmother into the work as its narrator allows Haun to position her such that she is an all-seeing but non-judgmental member of the community who also speaks to the audience. She is involved in so

much, yet she addresses the readers, or listeners, if one imagines her speaking to the audience instead of writing to them, with an observational tone and an awareness of the power she holds as the person creating the narrative. In this way, Haun is able to use her narrator, and her stories in general, to catalogue and preserve a way of life that, while flawed, was ebbing at the time of publication and has certainly waned in the years since.

V

In comparison with many of her contemporaries, very little about Haun's life and work is available for commentary and research. The pieces that we do have are all the more valuable for contextualizing and discussing her life with respect to her career, and vice versa. In short, a comprehensive picture of Haun's life and work is an ideal tool to have when discussing either.

There is considerably less literature available on Haun than on many of her contemporaries. We lack the kinds of primary, first person narrative sources where Haun would have told us in her own words what she was feeling and thinking at various moments in her life. Outside of her correspondence with some of her mentors, including Ransom and Davidson, Haun wrote very little in the way of diaries and other more open, unfiltered ways of expression. So, alongside correspondence, the sequence of dates and places that comprise Haun's life is an invaluable tool in a discussion of her life and work.

The Hawk's Done Gone and *The Hawk's Done Gone and Other Stories* both present a complicated relationship with the mountain South. Haun both preserves and critiques her home culture, using the voice of a cultural figurehead, the granny woman. Haun introduces the reader to the granny woman and her prominent place in the community, but does not hesitate to present her in the context of her patriarchal society. Mary Dorthula struggles to establish her value in a setting dominated widely by men, though her voice is often one of reason in a conversation based on impulse and emotion.

Haun's own voice as an author with agency struggled for prominence in her correspondence with her publisher at Bobbs-Merrill, even though showcasing her work was the best business choice for the company and for her career. During the publication of the second

edition, her voice was completely dependent on Gower's decisions in her name as her literary executor.

Haun's work functions as a catalogue of a culture: it preserves moments and attitudes pertaining to race, medicine and healing, family dynamics, and ballads to name a few, while bringing more universal concepts like domestic violence and murder into the conversation to create a familiar signpost for a reader who may be foreign to the culture at hand. Through Mary Dorthula's subtle explanations and gentle asides, we learn that a witch will not pick up a broom if it is on the ground in the doorway, and that blood in cow's milk is an omen of bad things to come. She forces us to accept her reality, with all of its superstitions and injustices, so that we might learn her culture. Additionally, her calm acceptance and navigation of the supernatural reinforces it as an everyday presence. Christianity (as many people understand it) falls second to the natural and supernatural signs that Mary Dorthula and her daughters see. A sign in a well or spring and the weather on a wedding day are better predictors of a possible marriage than a courtship or engagement period and counsel from a church leader, for example.

Mildred Haun's Appalachian South, largely consigned to obscurity, does significant enough cultural work that it deserves prominence in classrooms and in the canon. Haun presents the people and traditions of her mountains without stereotyping them, which in itself is worthy of study by so-called regional authors. Her ability to distance herself from such a close topic through her narrator and narrative structure shows remarkable control of the sequence of the work that valuable anyone who values a discussion of craft.

Haun's work is deserving of the kind of recognition that regional authors like Lee Smith, Robert Morgan, and Ron Rash enjoy today. *The Hawk* has spent long enough on the backmost

shelves of warehouses⁷ and remainder bins, and is deserving of prominence in homes and classrooms. It may well have secured the longstanding attention that it deserves if Haun had not struggled with her publisher to establish her voice and if she had not died at 55 with only one book published. Like her narrator, Haun's voice had to fight through time and patriarchal systems of control to find an audience. Re-examining her life and work today is a worthwhile pursuit that would add to the richness of an exploration of Appalachian literature as a whole.

⁷ Demand for *The Hawk* is so low that it takes Amazon anywhere from four to eight weeks to ship the work after a Prime customer places an order.

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Williams, Debra. "Haun Family Ways." *Appalachian Heritage*, vol. 36, no. 2, 0ADAD, pp. 25–28. *ProQuest*, Accessed 26 Sept. 2016. apart over time--her connection to and enthusiasm for Haun is already invaluable.